

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

1. SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR PAYS COURTESY CALL ON NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, CONSERVATIVE SUNNI POLITICAL ASSOCIATION. DISCUSSES U.S. POLICY AND CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON. NATIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERS FEEL THEIR ATTITUDES AND IDEOLOGY HAVE BEEN MISREPRESENTED BY CHRISTIANS AND SAY THEY ARE AS LOYAL TO LEBANON AS CHRISTISNS ARE. THEY ADMIT NEED FOR MORE CONTACT WITH CHRISTIAN SIDE, BUT ARE NOT VERY CONFIDENT ABOUT THE UTILITY OF A DIALOGUE. END SUMMARY.

2. I MET WITH LEADERS OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (AL-HAY'A AL-WATANIYA) EVENING APRIL 26. THIS IS CONSERVATIVE SUNNI POLITICAL GROUP UNDER PRESENT CHAIRMANSHIP OF AMINE ARAYSSI AND INCLUDES SUCH NOTABLES AS ABDULLAH MASHNOUK, RAFIQ NAJA AND FUAD BOHSALI. THERE WERE SOME 20 PEOPLE IN THE ROOM WHO TOOK TURNS TELLING ME WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF PRESIDENT SITUATION. THEIR VIEWS WERE INTERESTING CHANGE FROM THOSE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO WHOM I HAVE HAD RATHER HEAVY EXPOSURE IN RECENT WEEKS.

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3. SEVERAL THINGS IN PARTICULAR SEEMED TO BE ON MINDS OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATION. FIRST OF ALL THEY COMPLAINED THAT CHRISTIANS HAD MISREPRESENTED THEIR POSITION, CALLING THEM COMMUNISTS, LEFTISTS AND ANTI-LEBANESE. THEY IN FACT ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-LEFTIST AND PRO-LEBANESE IN AN ARAB CONTEXT. THEY DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO AN

ARGUMENT ABOUT PHOENICIANS VERSUS ARABS BUT WISHED TO POINT OUT THAT ALL LEBANESE WERE SEMITES AND IT MADE NO SENSE TO TALK ABOUT WHO WAS HERE FIRST. SECONDLY, THEY WERE CONCERNED AT MARONITE ATTEMPTS TO CONTINUE A DOMINATION MADE POSSIBLE FOR THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE BY THEIR SUPERIOR EDUCATION. SUNNIS DID NOT WANT TO DEPRIVE MARONITES OF THEIR WEALTH OR POSITION. THEY JUST WANTED CHANCE TO IMPROVE THEIR OWN LOT, BUT THEY HAD FOUND THE DOORS BARRED TO THEM. THIRDLY, THEY WERE CONCERNED BY THE DRIFT TO THE LEFT AMONG YOUNGER MOSLEMS WHO WERE DENIED OPPORTUNITIES. THIS WAS A DANGER NOT ONLY FOR LEBANON BUT FOR THE ARAB WORLD AS A WHOLE. AS THINGS WERE GOING, ONE OF THESE DAYS LEBANON WOULD BE EXPORTING TENS OF GEORGE HABBASHES AND TENS OF NAIF HAWATMEHS TO REST OF THE ARAB WORLD.

5. I GAVE THEM STANDARD STATEMENT OF OUR POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT SARKIS AND OPPOSITION TO PARTITION AND OF OUR INTENTION TO MAKE DETERMINED EFFORT TO SOLVE PALESTINE PROBLEM. I THEN MADE SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON SITUATION IN LEBANON, NOTING THAT THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM SEEMED DUE IN PART TO FACT THAT THERE LITTLE CONTACT AND NO DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEM. BEIRUT WAS A DIVIDED CITY AND CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM WERE IGNORING EACH OTHER. MY HOSTS AGREED BUT ASKED WITH WHOM THEY WOULD HAVE A DIALOGUE AND ON WHAT TERMS. LEBANON FRONT WAS NOT TALKING IN TERMS THEY COULD DISCUSS AMICABLY. NATIONAL ORGANIZATION HAD INITIALLY ACCEPTED IDEA OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRAL-
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IZATION BUT NOW FOUND IT HAD BEEN CHANGED TO POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION, AND THAT THEY COULD NOT ACCEPT. THEY HAD DECIDED NOT TO RESPOND TO LEBANON FRONT'S PROPAGANDA STATEMENTS ON PARTITION AND VARIOUS FORMULAS AND PROPOSITIONS FOR THE FUTURE BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD GIVE THOSE PROPOSITIONS A VALUE THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE. THEY THOUGHT THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT WOULD DO NO GOOD TO HAVE THE TWO SIDES MEET IN THE SAME ROOM BECAUSE BOTH WOULD BE OBLIGED TO STAND UP AND EXPRESS THEIR MOST EXTREME POSITIONS. THEY RECOGNIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE MUST BE INCREASE IN CONTACT AND AGREED THAT THE LEBANESE MUST START LOOKING AT THEIR COUNTRY AND THEIR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES IN A NEW LIGHT.

6. AT CLOSE OF MEETING ABDULLAH MASHMOUK, LONG A THORN IN OUR SIDE IN THE PAST, MADE A REMARKABLE STATEMENT ABOUT HOW WONDERFUL MY REMARKS HAD BEEN. NEITHER FSL MAMARY NOR I COULD BELIEVE OUR EARS.

EITHER THINGS HAVE CHANGED OR MASHNOUK WANTS SOMETHING.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

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